

The Three and the Wheel

by Dana Fried

Introduction

You are the Great Spirits, immortal makers of the world.

You take three forms that drive its existence, one in each role:

The Wild Prince, horned and beautiful

The Queen of Light, glittering and majestic

The Iron Sickle, stark and unrelenting

Together, you will tell the story of the world, from its creation to its destruction.

Design Notes

Key concepts: microgame, decentralized narrative authority (GM-less), democratization of rules and themes (with fixed themes of balance and transformation); social media/online compatibility

Inspirations: Ben Robbins' *Microscope* and *Kingdom*, Jackson Tegu's *Silver and White*.

Setup

IRL Play

There are three double-faced cards with characters on the front side and rules on the back; print a copy of each for each player and have them read through all of the cards. Make sure you have at least two working pens or pencils handy.

Hangouts/Skype Play

Same as in person but use a shared document for each player's cards. You won't need pens or pencils.

Play by Post/Social Media

The same as Hangouts or Skype, except that assent can be marked with a "like", "+1", or equivalent. The character sides of the cards can be filled out by pasting the completed text into the comment stream instead of using a shared document.

Play Tips

Be sure to say who you're narrating for when playing a character. Note that you can act both as a Spirit and as characters in its purview during a scene.

Be sure to ask questions that forward the plot.

Each cycle is a new age; feel free to jump around (and especially forward) in time to add depth to the story.

Be sure to pick "In order to take my place" conditions which are easily fulfilled in play.

Card 1

As the Wild Prince

I appear as:

I may always: set the backdrop of a scene; dictate the whims of nature; claim and narrate for country folk and spirits of the wild

Once per cycle I may:

- Incite people to passion
- Call forth the wrath of the natural world
- _____

In order to take my place, another Spirit must:

1. In the Beginning

You are the Great Spirits, immortal makers of the world.

You take three forms that drive its existence, one in each role:

- **The Wild Prince**, horned and beautiful (responsible for color and backdrop)
- **The Queen of Light**, glittering and majestic (responsible for populating scenes)
- **The Iron Sickle**, stark and unrelenting (responsible for maintaining game flow)

Together, you will tell the story of the world, from its creation to its destruction.

Each of you choose a different form and fill out its card with your own vision. Make sure your “In order to take my place” condition is easily achievable.

Card 2

As the Queen of Light

I appear as:

I may always: add major characters to a scene; describe the ways of civilization; claim and narrate for city folk and daemons of progress

Once per cycle I may:

- Inspire people to advance their civilization
- Twist something to the service of progress
- _____

In order to take my place, another Spirit must:

2. Turn the Wheel

Go around the table. Each player asks an interesting question that could be answered in a scene. The questions can jump ahead to events much later in the cycle, or even imply a particular outcome - don't be timid!

If there is any disagreement as to the answer, play the scene to determine what happens. The Prince sets the backdrop; the Queen adds major players; the Sickle says when it ends.

When you fulfill another Spirit's "In order to take my place" condition:

- Exchange forms (but not cards); fill out your card for the new form if you have not yet
- Each of you describes your transformation, how the world around you transforms in sympathy, and how your new form appears
- A new cycle begins - make sure to make the world feel different in the following scenes.

Card 3

As the Iron Sickle

I appear as:

I may always: end a scene; end an insignificant individual or trend; claim and narrate for those who serve entropy and endings

Once per cycle I may:

- Lay low any person or thing, up to and including whole civilizations
- Demonstrate the full folly of mortals' hubris
- ---

In order to take my place, another Spirit must:

3. By Your Will Alone

Any Spirit may claim a new or existing character in a scene. Say, “**I claim [name], who [description]**”. That character is now a representative of your agenda for the scene.

Any Spirit may suggest a thing to happen, but the Spirit whose purview it is must make it so.

If another player narrates something you do not want in the story, say, “**That’s not what happens.**” If the third player agrees, the detail is stricken from the fiction.

Any player may suggest the end of the game by asking the question, “**Does this break the Wheel?**” If both other players agree it does, play one final scene (or collaboratively construct a vignette) showing how the world ends.

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